

Pine Whispers

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History

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WASATCH

This is an invitation to share the beauty and the peace of wonderful Wasatch County. Here is a land of forested mountains, luscious meadows, cool, crystal-clear springs, and sparkling, singing streams; a land that Providence did not forget, a majestic mountain paradise, inviting pastoral valleys framed by myriad shades of green on the gentle contour of the surrounding hills.

Inaccessible for centuries, lost in the great expanse of the sunbaked, great Basin desert, this choice land, it seems was preserved and destined to offer healing and recreation to the weary, and a welcome, quiet relief from the pressure and tension of hurried and noisy living.

The heart of this great county is the mountain-guarded valley of the Upper Provo. It seems logical to conclude that this enchanting vale was created to provide a spot where good people could come together and build a community of peace and gentility.

In countless ways nature favored this region of Wasatch. The altitude gives us pure air — the climate, through the change of seasons adds to the enjoyment of zestful living here. The Master Artist gave her incomparable scenery — the green valley in spring and summer — the color, the glory of the hills in autumn, and when this masterpiece of color fades into winter, the indescribable inspiration of the white cleanliness of the snow.

From the many fragments we find of the dim and almost buried past, we learn that this "Round Prairie", as the Utes and Shoshones called this valley, was a refuge from struggle, privation, and war. The Indians gathered here in cool summer to "Pow-wow" — to play, to leisurely hunt and fish. They mingled with neighboring tribes in sporting contests, found abundant living, plentiful game in the hills, and fishing in the rocky River Timpanogos, later to be called the Provo. Restful, cool evenings and green meadows, cold mountain water and warm springs for bathing made this truly a restful resort.

Man seemed to partake of the peace of this place. No battles were fought here. Life and men were at their

best. Later as the trappers and pioneer homesteaders adopted this area the same tranquility prevailed. Here was beneficent nature. The violence of many western frontier settlements was avoided. Here was peace.

No amount of reading and study of our thrilling story in history book or journal can so bring alive our rich past, whose origin is almost lost in the mists of time, as the actual seeing of the places where history was made. In this mountain-circled retreat waves of ancient and expansive Lake Bonneville laved the lower sector of this valley of the Timpanogos. Prehistoric mammoth the great musk ox, wild horses, and the Big Horn sheep roamed this area more than ten thousand years ago. Man, the newcomer, entered the stage centuries later.

In this Land of the Wasatch you tread sacred ground. You see and feel history. Here, once the worn trails of moccasin, the footprints of the elk, the moose, the deer, and many denizens of the wild have left their imprint. Indelibly stamped are the trails, reworn by galloping Indian horsemen — and the tracks of the heavy pioneer wagons.

Originally, the County of Wasatch extended east to the Colorado line — the land of the dinosaurs and the impressive Uintah were within her borders. The intrepid Spanish explorers, Father Dominguez and Father Escalante were the first known white men to view this mountain empire. They visited the present County in the Strawberry Valley in 1776.

Probably the first white man to visit this Provo Valley were the trappers, who found hunting for fur-bearing animals very profitable. Provost, Ashley, Bridger, Sublette, Jed Smith, and others held rendezvous — hunted, trapped, cached their pelts in the "Round Prairie" and the near "Kamas Prairie". The Kamas Prairie formed an easy pass from the Wyoming plains by way of the Weber to the Timpanogos Valley, later called the Valley of the Upper Provo. A well-defined trail leads from Utah Lake up the Timpanogos River, following the cottonwood shaded slopes

and the accessible shallow crossings to the "Round Prairie."

The spirit of the trail that leads into undiscovered valleys just beyond forever beckoned to pioneer souls. The pioneer cannot resist the lure of these canyon paths, and soon the early settlers in Utah began probing further into the unexplored valley.

In the summer of 1857 three saw-mill workers in Cottonwood Canyon crossed the head of Big Cottonwood Canyon over the ridge to Snake Creek, then followed down the Snake Creek to the present site of Heber City and traveled down to Provo in the same day. The report of the three, Charles N. Carroll, George Jaques, and James Adams, created great interest in the grassy valley and its timber resources. In July of 1858 James C. Snow, Utah County Surveyor, surveyed a tract of land in the northern part of the Heber City Townsite.

In 1858 William Meeks, William Wall, Orson Daniels, and George W. Bean drove a herd of stock into this valley and settled in the lower end, near the present site of Charleston. They put up wild hay and stayed through the cold winter, thus becoming the first settlers.

During the winter of 1858-1859, several groups of homeseekers in the frontier town of Provo planned and marked time for the journey up Provo Canyon to the mountain-girdled valley. April 29th, the long awaited trip was begun up the track, worn by Indian footprints and the ponies of war-parties, hunters, and trappers. They struggled over the snowslide at the South Fork, and after two days of trudging through this gorge of imposing granite cliffs and waterfalls of breath-taking beauty and pine-clad wonder, the travelers arrived at Wall's cattle corral to have their first view of the fabulous Valley of the Upper Provo. The wagons kept to the east side of the river and halted at a large spring just north of the present site of Heber City. Here they hurriedly constructed a large wicki-up of poles, mud and grass.

The shelter was large enough to house thirty people. Because of its size it became known as the London Wicki-up — (it seems logical that these immigrants, mostly English, should name the dwelling and the large spring, "London", because of their size. In this group were the families of John Crook, James and John Carlyle, Jesse Bond and Hyrum Chatwin, Charles N. Carroll, William Giles, Thomas Rasband, John Jordan, and William Carpenter. Three other families were also located near the group in the Center Creek area. They were William Davidson, Robert Broadhead, and James Davis. The first white child born in the valley was a daughter of William and Ellen Davidson, in November 1859. They named her Timpanogos Davidson.

During the same April 1859, a group made their way up the west side of the valley, and on April 19th they located near the cottonwood groves and green meadows of birch-lined Snake Creek. They built dirt-roofed, cottonwood log cabins for their families, and corrals for their stock, securing themselves for the coming winter. In this group were Jeremiah Robey, Sidney Epperson, Mark Smith, David Wood, Jesse McCarrell and Edwin Bronson.

Life in the valley was one of sacrifice and scarcity. These settlers lived with happiness and abundant good will and high hopes. They lived richly, without things. They enjoyed the wealth of friendship, faith, and goodwill. They experienced the joy of sharing with each other. On cold winter mornings fire torches were carried from cabin to cabin to insure warmth for all. Fields were declared open after harvest for common pasturage. Chokecherrying group trips were made to the hills for wild fruit. Everyone traded work with neighbors — quilting by groups of mothers were common. Community home dramatics and musical concerts were held. Horse-drawn bob-sleigh rides by moonlight, sleighbells ringing, voices singing in the sleds, warmed by quilts and straw were favorite pastimes.

Church meetings and parties were attended by the entire community. They made their own enjoyments. Baseball, foot races, pony races brought the towns together in friendly rivalry. The dwellers in this homeland lived together as one united family.

The Black Hawk Indian War swept over the land like a wind-driven storm cloud, ominous with threat to their tranquility and freedom. The people, both in Heber and Midway, built forts for their protection. Outlying homemakers were welcomed into the forts. It may be the swift preparedness and united action paid off. No attack was made — no battle nor bloodshed marred the peace of our county.

The foresight and inspirational leadership of the Utah State Park Commission recognized the potential State Park. The cooperation of the towns, the county, and the State will develop the pine and aspen mountain country into one of the people's great assets. We shall keep this natural park free from despoilers, protect it from commercial plunder and wanton desecration.

In such an atmosphere of freedom and reverence, with climate and scenery of such loveliness, with men and women with love, and charity, and music in their hearts, Wasatch is sure to continue to progress and provide a Homeland of our fondest dreams.

Here are thousands of aspen grove picnic grounds, with pure, cold, mountain-spring water and ample aspen shade.

There is a pledge to soon construct an out-of-door amphitheater, where music festivals, drama, and reverent services will thrill us. With such a future, after the pattern of the Pioneers — zealous, progressive, pleasant — living together in an inspired setting will be enjoyed. There is a future for the citizens of this State and nation to enjoy, with their families, the great out-of-doors, God created for us.

Living in us now are the ideals of the explorers and the pioneers of the West. Our ideals will be projected into the new generations and become a part of the eternities, patterned after our lives — a bit of us — the best of us — will live forever.

• Autumn Dreams